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Canada's New Government Appoints Expert Panel to Study Labour Market Conditions that Affect Older Workers

OTTAWA, ONTARIO, January 23, 2007—The Honourable Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, has announced the appointment of an expert panel to study labour market conditions affecting older workers. The Panel will look at potential measures to help older workers, including improved training and enhanced income support, such as early retirement benefits.

Speaking at the Public Policy Forum's Conference on improving Canada's business environment and competitiveness, Minister Solberg announced the appointment of the Honourable Erminie Cohen, a retired Senator, as Chair of the expert panel. Ms. Cohen will be joined by three other members, also selected for their experience in studying policy issues: Bill MacKinnon, Chief Executive and Senior Partner, KPMG Canada, LLP; Craig Riddell, Professor, University of British Columbia; and Diane Bellemare, Senior Vice President and Chief Economist, *Conseil du patronat du Québec*.

"The fact is that seniors and older workers have helped build this country," said Minister Solberg. "Our population is ageing and we are facing labour shortages. Now is the time to look at issues faced by older workers and make sure that they have the knowledge and tools they need to contribute to a strong Canadian work force."

"It is important to promote the continued participation of older workers in Canada's labour market," said Senator Marjory LeBreton, Secretary of State (Seniors). "I welcome the announcement of the panel and their work on issues of interest to older Canadians."

"My colleagues and I are eager to get started with the work that lies ahead. Older workers are often an overlooked asset in the work force. Our objective is to provide the Government of Canada and Canadians with an impartial assessment of the needs of older workers," said Ms. Cohen.

The panel will consult extensively with provincial and territorial governments, as well as with employers, labour representatives, academics and other stakeholders and advise the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development on their findings.

The panel's study is the second part of Canada's new government's overall strategy to address adjustment issues faced by older workers.

See attached backgrounder.

- 30 -

This news release is available in alternative formats upon request.

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Backgrounder

Members of Expert Panel on Older Workers

Appointed by the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, the Honourable Erminie Cohen, a retired Senator, will chair the expert panel that will undertake a study on the labour market conditions facing older workers. The panel includes three other members, selected for their extensive experience and well-known capacity to examine technical and policy issues.

Panel Chair:

The Honourable Erminie Cohen, Retired Senator

Ms. Erminie Cohenbegan her public career in the 1970s and has been involved in a number of organizations including Saint John Women for Action and Saint Joseph's Hospital. She was appointed to the Canadian Senate in 1993 representing New Brunswick. Ms. Cohen also co-chaired the Progressive Conservative National Caucus Task Force on Poverty. She holds an Honorary Doctorate of Laws from the University of New Brunswick.

Panel Members:

Mr. William A. MacKinnon, Chief Executive and Senior Partner, KPMG Canada, LLP

Mr. Bill MacKinnon has been the Chief Executive Officer and Senior Partner, KPMG Canada, since 1999. He has long had an interest in community service and social matters, having been a member of the Modernizing Income Security for Working-Age Adults (MISWAA) Task Force and working with community agencies such as the United Way and the Toronto East General Hospital.

Professor W. Craig Riddell, Department of Economics, University of British Columbia

Professor W. Craig Riddell currently holds a Royal Bank Faculty Research Professorship at the University of British Columbia. He is the former Academic Co-Chair of the Canadian Employment Research Forum and past-president of the Canadian Economics Association. He has published a number of papers including: *The Role of Credentials in the Canadian Labour Market* and *Unions and Wage Inequality*.

Ms. Diane Bellemare, Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the Conseil du patronat du Québec

Ms. Diane Bellemare was President and Chief Executive Officer of the *Société québécoise de la main-d'oeuvre* and President of the *Commission des partenaires du marché du travail* from 1994 to 1999. Ms. Bellemare has previously taught economics at the *École des sciences de la gestion at l'Université du Québec à Montréal.* She has also published research papers in such fields as

employment, training and continuing education, labour force ageing and income security programs. Ms. Bellemare holds a PhD in economics from McGill University.

Expert Panel on Older Workers

TERMS OF REFERENCE

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the Expert Panel is to undertake a feasibility study on older workers as outlined in Budget 2006: "*...conduct, in partnership with provinces and territories, a feasibility study to evaluate current and potential measures to address the challenges faced by displaced older workers, including the need for improved training and enhanced income support, such as early retirement benefits.*"

SCOPE

The Expert Panel will examine:

- The broad labour market context and how older workers are positioned within that context, including sectoral and regional aspects of older worker participation and considerations related to under-represented groups, as well as considerations related to economic development initiatives;
- The impact of population ageing on the economy and labour force, and the impact of older worker participation in the labour force;
- The barriers and disincentives for older worker participation in the labour market;
- The characteristics and circumstances of displaced older workers;
- The current supports and services available to older workers to improve their labour market participation and resiliency;
- Possible initiatives, such as costing, for older workers including various passive (i.e. early retirement benefits) and active supports (i.e. suite of measures ranging from mentoring to new work experience);
- The interrelationship between respective levels of government and other stakeholders in the design and delivery of possible initiatives; and
- Potential program impacts on the labour market.

The Expert Panel will provide a report on these matters along with recommendations on potential government and stakeholder actions to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development by the summer of 2007.

CONSULTATIONS

Recognizing the importance of provincial and territorial governments, employers, labour representatives and academics, the Expert Panel will undertake a consultation process.

The Expert Panel may wish to release a discussion paper to launch the consultation process. A submission process should also be considered.

The Expert Panel will need to consult provinces and territories extensively throughout the process.

Stakeholders such as the academic community, employers, labour and other organizations should be consulted through a series of regionally based and academic round table discussions.

SECRETARIAT

The Expert Panel will be supported by a Secretariat to assist in its consultations and research. It may call on the expertise of the Department of Human Resources and Social Development.

TIMELINES

The Chair of the Expert Panel should meet with the Department of Human Resources and Social Development on a frequent basis to provide a progress report on the Panel's work and timelines.

All times are reflected in Atlantic time

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